

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT JASON T. SMITH

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honor the life and heroic service of SGT Jason T. Smith. Sergeant Smith, assigned to the 1st Explosive Ordnance Company, based in Iwakuni, Japan, died on November 19, 2010, from wounds he received while serving in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. He was 28 years old.

A native of Colorado Springs, CO, Sergeant Smith graduated from Doherty High School in 2000. Upon graduation, Sergeant Smith enlisted in the Marines and was quickly recognized as a skilled and composed soldier. He served three tours of duty: two in Iraq and one in Afghanistan all with decoration.

During his 10 years of service, Sergeant Smith distinguished himself through his courage, dedication to duty, and willingness to take on one of the most dangerous and skillful jobs in the Marines—defusing bombs. Fellow soldiers respected his intensity, and they relied heavily on his leadership. Sergeant Smith was also a gifted teacher, and Marines under his command cite his marksmanship instruction as a high-point in their career.

Sergeant Smith worked on the front lines of battle, serving in the most dangerous areas of Iraq and Afghanistan. He is remembered by those who knew him as a consummate professional with an unending commitment to excellence. His family remembers him as a dedicated son, brother, and as a loving husband to his wife. In his free time, Sergeant Smith enjoyed fishing and playing basketball.

Mark Twain once said, “The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time.” Sergeant Smith’s service was in keeping with this sentiment—by selflessly putting country first, he lived life to the fullest. He lived with a sense of the highest honorable purpose.

He braved the chaos of combat zones throughout Iraq and Afghanistan. And though his fate on the battlefield was uncertain, he pushed forward, protecting America’s citizens, her safety, and the freedoms we hold dear. For his service and the lives he touched, Sergeant Smith will forever be remembered as one of our country’s bravest.

To Sergeant Smith’s entire family—I cannot imagine the sorrow you must be feeling. I hope that, in time, the pain of your loss will be eased by your pride in Jason’s service and by your knowledge that his country will never forget him. We are humbled by his service and his sacrifice.

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES ACT

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I rise today to salute a number of organizations from my home State of Utah that have demonstrated vision as they plan

for the needs of our future. Utah is one of the fastest growing States in the country. Our rapid population growth is attributed to both the area’s high birth rate and to in-migration. We have a strong economy and have continued to attract workers during the recent economic recession. Yet even as we grow, our transportation system has not buckled under the pressure of explosive development. Regional and community planners, as well as business and political leaders have been looking forward to plan and meet the transportation infrastructure needs of our growing population. Our transit system of buses, vans, light rail and commuter rail is unparalleled and I am proud of the role I played in bringing TRAX and FrontRunner, our light rail and commuter rail services to the Wasatch Front. Last Thursday, November 25, 2010, marked 10 years that TRAX has been serving our communities. This expanding network has brought new possibilities to our residents and creates an economic rebirth in each community it touches.

There are a number of lessons that other areas can learn from the success of Utah’s transit expansion. Planning for the needs of a changing population should be the standard, rather than the exception in every community. Recently, Utah was again recognized for its innovative planning. Last month the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD, announced a \$5 million award to support the creation of more livable and sustainable communities along the Wasatch Front. This funding will support development of a regional housing plan through a new initiative intended to build economic competitiveness by connecting housing with good jobs, quality schools and transportation. This grant is part of a new Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities, which brings EPA, HUD, USDA and DOT together to ensure that the agencies’ policies, programs, and funding consider affordable housing, transportation, and environmental protection together. I support the efforts of this interagency collaboration designed to get better results for American communities and to use taxpayer money more efficiently. I salute the Utah organizations whose vision brought this important grant to our State. The Utah consortium behind the grant is made up of the following partners—the Wasatch Front Regional Council, Mountainland Association of Governments, Envision Utah, the Utah Department of Transportation, UDOT, Utah Transit Authority, UTA, Salt Lake County, Salt Lake City, University of Utah’s Metropolitan Research Center and Bureau of Economic and Business Research, the Utah Chapter of the American Planning Association and other public and private sector partners. These visionaries joined together to apply for this grant through a nationwide competitive process to implement the growth strategies and vision in the region.

Over the past decade, public, private, academic and community leaders in Utah developed quality growth strategies for the Salt Lake metropolitan region. In 2010, they developed and adopted a regional vision, the Wasatch Choice for 2040, which is a blueprint for our region’s future. The sustainable communities grant Utah received will help make that blueprint a reality.

My friend and colleague, Senator DODD of Connecticut has introduced legislation that would create more of these grants, and go a step further by creating an Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities. This office would oversee efforts to help local communities plan for and create better and more affordable places to live, work, and raise families. The legislation would incentivize communities to make regional plans like Utah’s Wasatch Choice for 2040 and would fund sustainable development projects. I believe that with effective policies to encourage sustainable development, our communities will cut traffic congestion; reduce greenhouse gas emissions and gasoline consumption; protect rural areas and green spaces; revitalize existing Main Streets and urban centers; and create more affordable housing.

While I strongly support many of the ideas in this legislation, I have not added myself as a cosponsor, because of some concerns that have been raised. First and foremost, during this time of out of control spending, I feel it would be irresponsible of me to support the legislation without a plan to pay for the new spending it would create. It is my hope that some sort of a livable communities component will be included in a much needed transportation authorization bill that Congress should consider next year. This discussion of the future of the highway trust fund should also address the important of local planning efforts. I would also like to see a greater voice for small businesses and affected industries that would no doubt be greatly affected by the policies set in an effort to encourage sustainability. There are many important interests that need to be considered and included in the discussion.

The partnership between the Utah Transit Authority and our local, regional and State transportation planning organizations is a great example for many States. I feel confident that Utah will use the livable communities grant we are going to receive to continue to lead the nation in transportation and infrastructure planning. I urge my colleagues to give full consideration and take the time to learn and debate the ideas proposed in my friend Senator DODD’s legislation, S. 1619, the Livable Communities Act.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mrs. Neiman, one of his secretaries.